Pulpit

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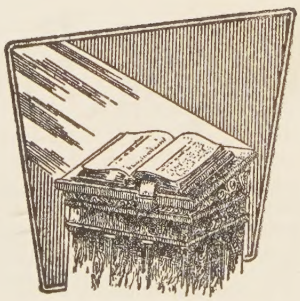

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Twelve unusually suggestive messages in Stewardship Sermons by Charles M. Crowe offer a resource of pertinent illustrations and homiletical ideas. The volume's emphases concern foundations of stewardship, time and talents, and possessions. (Abingdon Press, 141 pp., $2.50)

The Pastor's Prayerbook by Robert N. Rodenmayer contains 641 brief prayers which have been arranged according to the rhythm of the Christian year and particular needs. The selections come from a wide range of generations and experience, although the brevity of the prayers excludes their common use in most worship situations. (Oxford University Press, 319 pp., $5)

Faiths, Cults and Sects of America by Richard Mathison, a "Newsweek" reporter, is a fascinating interpretation and explanation of unconventional religious expressions. This readable analysis is a layman's guide to the unusual and esoteric ways in which men have expressed their convictions, or their lack of them. (Bobbs-Merrill Co., 384 pp., $5)

A book of extraordinary stature, **Word and Sacrament: A Preface to Preaching and Worship,** by Donald Macleod of the Princeton Theological Seminary, examines in a refreshing and imaginative fashion the significance of preaching and worship, and their interrelationships. Few books in this field are as articulate, persuasive, and helpful as this discerning and substantial volume. Not only is the book immediately relevant to a pas-

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WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey
The Federated Churches
Lewiston, Idaho

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.

William James

° ° °

When David volunteered to meet Goliath, the king dressed David in armour and gave him a stout sword to use against the giant. Apparently David felt foolish. He wasn't a knight or a swordsman. He was a shepherd. So, he removed the armour and went to meet Goliath with his slingshot. He knew better than to pretend to be what he wasn't.

Most of us, however, are not as wise as David. We are forever pretending. If we are on a short budget, we go in debt in order to look as if we were prosperous. If we are not very well informed, we pretend to know everything. We put on armour of one sort or another in order to hide what we really are . . . Why can't we wear our own clothes and be ourselves like David? . . . . One thoughtful, honest woman, who had spent half her life trying to be a social paragon when she wasn't society, remarked, "The happiest day of my life was the day I gave up pretending to be somebody." . . . . Comfortable people are those who are willing to be themselves. They aren't worried by the desire to make an impression one way or another. They know they aren't important except to

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Pulpit Preaching

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THE UNFOLDING YEARS

NEEDS FOR A NEW YEAR

William Goddard Sherman, Melrose Park Methodist Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Dr. H. Richard Niebuhr recently criticized those who understand religion to be essentially "the assertion of the primacy of ideas over personal relations." One of our severest problems is how to be a whole person in a world of depersonalization. Life is a matter of relationships, and mere theories and ideas about God and the spiritual realm are not adequate for our kind of society. A new year always affords an excellent time to take inventory of our convictions, and to outline our needs.

If we feel any need at all of religion, we should recognize at once that our religion must be a dynamic power, and not just a static theory. Any religion which is nothing more than ideas will be a hindrance rather than a help. There is, of course, nothing wrong with theory. But if it remains unworkable, it is of little value. It must be put into practice.

Much of the weakness of the Church today stems from the fact that we have allowed our Christianity to be mere speculation. Lacking power and vitality it fails to meet life's needs, for when life grows difficult we must have more than a theoretical system; we must have a redemptive force.

Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians, "Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" Religion is not mechanical, automatic, theoretical. We totally impoverish it when we make it so. Hearing in faith, we receive the divine strength, and come to a deeper awareness of God. Christianity, in its truer essence, is not a clever theory; it is an eternal fellowship.

The story is told of an artist who had illustrated many scenes from the life of Jesus. He came to that moment when everything seemed to lose meaning, and all of life collapsed. Seeing no way out, he committed suicide. He left a note which read, "If only I had known in my own heart the One whose life I so often portrayed on canvas." He knew many facts about Christ; but he did not know the Master in fellowship. Ideas and doctrines are no substitute for experience.

It is significant that all of the creeds of Christendom have been devised by the followers of Jesus. He gave us not a single one. His emphasis was upon a way of life; a fellowship with God; a creative relationship between God and man. There is nothing wrong with devising creeds, provided we do not permit this to be the totality of our religious experience. For it must be written large upon our memories: Christianity is a matter of living, and beliefs which are not applied to life become stale and stagnant.

I

High on our list of needs for the new year is an inner peace which will permit us to do our work in the world without becoming a casualty of the world's confusion. In one of his poems Edwin Markham has written:

> At the heart of the cyclone
> tearing the sky
> And flinging the clouds and

the towers by,
Is a place of central calm.

Here in Florida we know what the poet is talking about, for we have had many dealings with hurricanes. Suddenly, amid the vicious raging of the wind, the "eye" of the storm passes overhead, and everything is calm until the second half of the storm approaches. If we can find a place of serenity in the center of a cyclone, surely we should find that area of calm in the heart of the Christian. It is this calm which is the secret of the radiant life, for radiance is not a matter of mere outward appearance. It must come from a heart of trust. Radiance is the result of reliance upon God.

The inner calm of which we speak is basically a matter of spiritual perspective—seeing life whole, and seeing it as being held in the hand of God. This is a day of gnawing apprehension, and life seems enwalled by woe. Unless we can be convinced of God's concern we shall continue to be confused and disturbed by the affairs of the world.

The radio and television and motion pictures have always made a great deal of background music. The music for any drama is carefully chosen to create a mood. The wrong kind of background music could completely ruin a scene, for the proper emotional response would not be called forth from the viewers. Perhaps we need to ask the question: what is the background music of our own lives? What is the backdrop against which we play out our lives? What kind of "mood music" is created within our souls? Only we can determine what our atmosphere of life is to be, for we create our moods by our desires, our convictions, our whole attitude towards life and towards God.

The inner calm comes through faith that overarching us and undergirding us in the Infinite Love. "I had fainted, unless I had believed," wrote the Hebrew Psalmist. His terror was changed to serenity because he had a deep faith in the nearness of his Creator. Our radiance is too frequently crippled by the pessimism which grows out of a sense of inadequacy. Obviously the world is too great for us to conquer by ourselves, but we forget that we are not alone. We are conscious of our feeble strength, and we are fearful of facing the world with nothing more than this. Out of this kind of dark and gnawing pessimism came the lines of A. E. Housman:

In all the endless road you tread
There's nothing but the night.

To the man of faith the night is not all there is. In the midst of the soul's midnight, there is the Everlasting Life. When we become convinced that God is present in the darkness too, then we shall know that inner calm which we so desperately need.

II

Certainly in the days of the new year before us we shall need to have some great dreams—dreams that seem almost beyond us, so that we shall be stimulated and challenged to new heights. An ancient writer spoke of what will happen when a day comes that the Divine Spirit shall touch our human spirits: "Old men shall dream dreams, and young men shall see visions." We need that kind of day, for great things are accomplished by dreamers. Very often we ridicule the dreamer, and we reprimand those who build castles in the air. I like to remember that Henry Thoreau suggested that it is good to build such castles, provided we put foundations under them!

Great advancement does not come by accident, but by zeal and ambition applied to make our greatest dreams become realities. Edison, Bell, Pasteur, Jonas Salk, and Jesus himself—all were dreamers. But they did not let their dreams disintegrate. They

caught a vision of what the world could be, and they dedicated themselves to making their dreams and their visions take shape before their eyes. The world needs more dreamers of their kind.

Let us not suggest that we are exalting the idle day-dreaming which is the habit of those who are unstable and insecure. Someone has said that air castles are best built by those with feet firmly on the ground. The dreamers of which we speak are those who realize that our world can be better than it is. They are optimistic about our great country, as were the early settlers, and those who fashioned the American dream through the centuries of her growth. To them America was a Land of Promise. The spirit of it was captured in the lines inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

One wonders whether the golden door is now becoming tarnished, for our optimism seems to have turned to pessimism. What has happened to our dreams of freedom, brotherhood, equality, and love to all mankind? What is now the purpose for which we exist? What is the incentive that drives us forward? A writer in a British theological journal said recently, "The British society, like every other, is organized for the purposes of making war." And Professor Northrup of Yale has observed "that the more civilized we become the more incapable of maintaining civilization we are." Has our Land of Promise become only a world of broken promises?

Our dreams of goodness, and of greatness, can become reality if we build upon the foundation of faith in God. Unless we have a faith that is sparkling and vital we shall find life losing its luster, and even its very meaning. Not many years ago one of this nation's leading statesmen ended his own life. In the room where he came to his tragic death he left a volume of poems which was opened to the faithless lines of Sophocles:

> When reason's day
> Sets rayless, joyless, quenched in cold decay,
> Better to die in sleep
> The never waking sleep, than linger on
> And dare to live, when
> The soul's life is gone.

This particular incident gained wide publicity because of the prominence of the man, but its greater tragedy lies in the fact that it is not unique. Day after day the bitter scene unfolds itself anew, so that the late Albert Camus called this "the century of fear," and Chesterton characterized modern man as "a raving windmill of pessimism."

If we wait upon God in faith we shall find power and peace. With a confident assurance to sustain us we can apply our energies to the building of a better world in the year ahead.

LIVING FOR TOMORROW TODAY

Arthur H. Kolsti, First Congregational Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

Let us talk about our world as it will be tomorrow, and what we Christians are doing now to prepare for that world. How alert are we to the signs of the times as they confront us in a changing world?

Most of us would probably consider ourselves prudent in terms of facing the eventualities of tomorrow. Our automobiles are covered by insurance

policies. Our homes are protected against the loss of property through fire. Many of us carry accident and sickness insurance to provide us a financial cushion in the day of difficulty. Most responsible parents have given thought to the education of their children and, at the least, are anticipating the need. We prepare in some way for years of retirement through participation in social security, a pension fund, or an insurance program. Such provision for the possibilities of tomorrow lies at the heart of a responsible ordering of our resources and obligations.

But some of the things for which we prepare are just possibilities. Your house may not catch fire, your automobile may not be damaged, and no one may be hurt on your property. Such things may never happen. If we put such energy into preparing for possibilities, what kind of energy do we put into preparing for certainties?

A story tells of a man who boarded a train and sat next to a man who was casually reading a book. The newcomer noted that as the man finished a page he would tear it off, crumple it in his hand, and throw it in the aisle. The action so aroused his curiosity that the newcomer tapped the rider on the shoulder and asked, "Pardon me, but why do you rip the pages out of your book and throw them in the aisle?"

"That, sir," replied the reader, "is my secret method for keeping lions away."

Still puzzled, the explanation was accepted and the questioner settled back in his chair while his partner continued to read and rip each completed page from the book. Finally, after an hour, the questioner could stand it no longer.

"Look," he said, "I've been on this train an hour and I haven't seen a lion. In fact, I don't think there's a lion within a hundred miles of us."

The reader turned and with blank expression said, "Well, you can see my system is effective."

The point of the story is simply that so often we provide for eventualities that are only projections of our inner fears. Amos speaks of the day of judgment in these words: "As if a man should run from a lion and fall into the arms of a bear." We are sometimes blind to the real dangers to our security. Today there are changes and forces that will have a direct and certain effect upon us in the future, and the real test of our prudence is our ability to recognize them and respond accordingly. The real question is: Are we prepared for the things that will really happen tomorrow?

I

Jesus dealt with this matter of preparing realistically for future certainties in a most unusual parable. The parable tells of a certain steward whose master is about to make a strict audit of accounts. The charges are serious enough to result in his being fired. If the steward has not been honest with his employer, he is at least honest with himself. His pride prevents him from becoming a begger and his love of the good life precludes his doing menial labor. "I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg."

He devised a plan. He will ingratiate himself with his master's customers. He will maneuver them into a position of owing him a few favors, His plan is clever. On his own responsibility, he contacts the customers and settles their bills with generous discounts of fifty and twenty percent. When the master discovers this additional fraud, he is nonplussed. Angry as he may well be, he has to conclude the fact that although this man is a crook, he is a clever crook. Then Jesus drives home his point. "The Master commended the dishonest steward." And here is the bite in the parable aimed at the church: "For the sons of this world are in their generation wiser than the sons of light."

Jesus does not commend dishonesty in this parable. What He does com-

mend is this man's recognition of the facts of life and his ingenuity and determination to act accordingly. One thing of which the steward was not guilty was an easy going complacency, a false sense of security. This man did not live in a fool's paradise. The axe was about to fall. The signs were all around him. This is the central fact about the steward's condition. His status was about to change. Time was running out for him. The dreadful judgment of tomorrow was a certainty. He had sense enough to recognize the cold facts of his precarious situation. When he put two and two together, he came up with four — not five. Here we have no drift-along nice guy, but a shrewd realist. Jesus draws a comparison to drift-along Christians who often shut their eyes to the facts. The point of the parable is that man must come to terms with history. He needs the faculty to recognize fact, welcome or unwelcome, and the foresight to act accordingly. Someone has said that a neurotic is a person who builds dream houses, a psychotic is a person who lives in a dream house, and a psychiatrist is the person who collects the rent. Our parable is a call to come out of a dream house and live with the facts of life.

II

At this point, can we make a brief assessment of present facts in our world, facts that point to particular certainties in our situation twenty-five to fifty years from now? Who can speak with certainty about conditions that will exist several years from now and of the world our children will know?

For one thing, we can say that it will be a crowded world. This is not a guess. This is a fact. One signal fact that is now affecting the shape of tomorrow is the demographic explosion. The world is getting crowded. At the present time the world population is growing at the rate of forty-three million a year. This means that every four years mankind adds to its population the present population of the United States. At the rate of increase prevailing between the death of Christ and the reign of Elizabeth I, sixteen centuries were needed for the world to double its population. At the present rate, the world population will double in fifty years. And this explosive multiplication is taking place in a world where millions already live at a substandard level of existence.

What do these facts bode for our world of tomorrow? Look at India with her population of four hundred forty million people, a population greater than that of North and South America combined, squeezed into an area one-third the size of the United States. What do these facts imply for a nation clutching a wobbly democracy, hard pressed by six hundred million Chinese under the banner of communism? What do these facts mean in terms of adequate housing, crowded slums, and social unrest?

We will be living in a crowded world and in a crowded nation. In ten years we will have some three hundred ten million people. We will have at least nine super cities with populations registered in eight figures. Already men are speaking of the coastal strip from Augusta, Maine, to Miami as one continuous metropolitan area. Another is the strip around the lakes from Milwaukee to Buffalo. What will this expansion mean in terms of a demand for new churches and ministers to serve these churches? What are the spiritual and social problems that will be present when such huge groupings of people are pitted together?

Another fact that presents itself is that the world of tomorrow will be a world of new nations and power groups. As new nations come into being in Africa and as Asian nations grow in strength, there will no doubt be a shift in the world power balance.

Another fact that applies uniquely to our own nation is that our nation will continue, despite some down

periods, to be an increasingly prosperous nation. Of course, this is a welcome fact, but it carries with it certain definite warnings. I recall a warning about forest fires that read, "Uninterrupted sunshine sets the stage for forest fires. It's time for extra caution."

What happens to the mentality of a generation when luxuries are considered necessities, when extravagance becomes common place? What happens to our sense of values, our ability to discern the essentials of life, and our appreciation of material blessings? The Bibical concept is that wealth creates a special calling within the will of God.

Subtle dangers are involved in material abundance. Jesus said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven." This is not because wealth is wrong or bad, but because it creates a problem for the possessor. He is apt to lose contact with the mainstream of human problems. Lazarus sat at the door of Dives and Dives' fault was that he didn't see Lazarus. He had no conception at all of what it meant to be hungry. He became blind to the needs of his brother.

Wealth also creates the illusion of well-being and security. This was the trap that ensnared the man who tore down his barns to build bigger ones, and then sat back to enjoy the good life. Do you recall the last line in the parable? "You fool, tonight your soul is required." One of the dangers confronting us is that we will live in a luxurious island of unreality and be incapable of understanding the problems that plague the rest of mankind.

These then, are some of the facts that will eventually affect us and our children and their children. The question posed for the steward is the same one posed for us: What will we do? Are we going to prepare now for the certainties of tomorrow? Perhaps Jesus told this parable because He feared His followers were often too complacent.

III

Protestant Christianity in this country has, at times, shown a marked inability to anticipate the future. It is the opinion of a good many in city mission work that through just such blindness we forfeited our place in the inner city. When the immigrants arrived from Europe, many were eager to learn and adopt the ways of their new homeland. We did not reach out to them. As the immigrant stepped from the boat, the first to meet him were the infamous boarding house runners. We could not understand a man's ambition to be a cobbler or own a push-cart. We did not open the doors of our churches to the men named "Dubrowski" and "Stanislaus" with their broken English. For these blunders we are paying the price today in the inner city. I believe this opinion is well-founded. The sons of light can show an amazing lack of foresight.

Not so the sons of this world. They never lose a trick. At the Battle of Waterloo. Nathan Myer Rothschild, a spectator, is said to have watched the battle from a shot proof tent. At sunset, he saw the French beginning to give way. He sprang into the saddle and rode all night, reaching the shore at daybreak. He bribed a fisherman to take him across the channel and he reached London thirty-six hours before anyone heard of Wellington's victory. He used these hours in trading on the stock market to such advantage that he gained nearly two million pounds.

Are we prepared to anticipate the headlines of tomorrow in terms of the work of the historic church? In the parts of this crowded world where population problems are most acute, the church is present. This is no accident. It is the result of committed men and women in our churches of another generation. They founded mission societies and backed them up. Men are prepared to explore the moon today. Let Christians remember

the earth and her needs. Lucia Trent puts it so well:

> Your rice bowl is empty,
> little brother,
> Your hands are blue from the
> cold.
> Your face is a map of terror
> and pain,
> Old as mankind is old.
>
> Men launch their miracles,
> little brother,
> They send their rockets up;
> But should it not be their
> first concern
> To fill your empty cup?
>
> Men try to reach the moon,
> little brother,
> To lasso outer space;
> But would they not come
> closer to God
> If they wiped the pain from
> your face?

In this crowded America of tomorrow, what guarantee is there that the church will be adequately represented in the swelling cities and suburbs or on heavily populated campuses of our universities? When our children marry and their work takes them to Detroit, Chicago, or San Francisco, will there be churches to serve them? Now is the time to undergird the homeland mission of the church.

Now is the time to be concerned with the emerging nations of the world. When we see the suicidal directions in which the Castros and Mayos would lead their people and when we read of resurgent African tribalism, we have cause for deep concern. In the prosperous America of which the economists speak, now is the time to try and make sure it is an America guided by Christian principles, an America having strong and effective churches, an America with a heritage of Christian concern.

IV

Are we prepared for tomorrow in terms of our readiness today, not for comfort and security, but for sacrifice and generosity and the way of the Cross? So much of the shape of our tomorrow will be determined by the depth of our commitment today to our own gospel.

The pace of world change leaves us dizzy, and how slow we are to respond to changing conditions. Dr. Fosdick tells about the country boy who stayed at the Statler Hotel in Buffalo in 1907. For the first time in history, the Statler offered every guest a private room with bath. The country boy wrote home, "The bathroom is so wonderful I can hardly wait until Saturday night."

Our habits have a way of lagging behind the changes of history. Many of our habits in the church have become conventional but a conventional churchmanship will not suffice in these days. In the days of the American Revolution, Governor Morris, who was an American representative in Paris, wrote these words to George Washington about Louis XVI: "In ordinary times he would have been a good king, but he has inherited a revolution." Conventional churchmanship may suffice in calmer days, but not in days of revolution. Our Christian faith involves the total commitment of the total man to a living Lord. It is a commanding passion, or it is nothing at all.

Isaiah 39, contains an incident from the last days of King Hezekiah. Envoys of the Babylonian king came up to Jerusalem. So flattered was Hezekiah that he showed them his treasury, his armory, and his storehouses. When the Prophet Isaiah learned of the king's foolish lack of discretion, he rebuked him:

> "Behold, the days are coming
> when all that is in your house,
> and that which your fathers
> have stored up to this day,
> shall be carried to Babylon.
> Nothing shall be left. Your own
> sons shall be eunuchs in the
> palace of the King of Baby-
> lon."

Hezekiah made this strange reply,

"The Word of the Lord which you have spoken is good," for he thought, "there will be peace and security in my time." Hezekiah was not worried about tomorrow. His nest was well-feathered. Why should he care? He left his children and their children to pay the price of his folly. There is an inexorable judgment in history passed upon the work of every generation.

You and I may take Hezekiah's attitude. The certainties of tomorrow may not take place in our day. We can live in relative security and quiet, but as Paul reminds us, "Every man's work will be tested by fire." Our children and their children will reap the bitter harvest of our failure.

And let us think also of that larger tomorrow in God's eternity. Every steward faces a day of accounting within the dimension of eternity. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy wrote that he imagined that at the judgment bar of Christ, the Lord would simply look at us and ask one question, "Well . .?"

Our tomorrow is being fashioned today. The certainties of that tomorrow place before us frightening possibilities and great expectations. The ancient challenge cuts right across our times:

> "This day I have set before thee good and evil
>
> Choose this day whom you shall serve."

THE NEW COVENANT: A COMMUNION MEDITATION

Everett W. Palmer, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

Texts: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . ." Jeremiah 31:31

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood . . ." I Corinthians 11:25

"Covenant!" That is an honored and noble word of the Bible. We come upon it frequently both in the Old Testament and in the New.

Also, it is a key word in the most sacred of all practices in Christian worship, the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Throughout nineteen centuries when Christians have gathered in remembrance of Jesus Christ to celebrate His Presence and Power, it has been spoken. As they have made ready to drink of the Cup the minister has repeated what our Lord said to His friends during their Last Supper with Him when He made their common cup a symbol of His mission, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you."

I

The term "covenant," in its broad sense of course, speaks of a responsible relationship. If we borrow money, as most of us do at one time or another, we enter into a covenant with the lending agency. The bank accepts responsibility for providing a certain sum of money for a specified period of time; we in turn accept responsibility for repaying the money with interest according to a schedule mutually agreed upon. It is a responsible relationship. If a decision is made to get a new car we enter into a covenant. We agree ot pay a stipulated price and the manufacturer through his local dealer provides a guarantee concerning condition of the car upon delivery. It is a responsible relationship. A man and woman agree to become husband and wife. Of a consequence they enter into a covenant. They secure a license from the state and then exchange holy vows before a minister in the presence of witnesses. They pledge themselves each to the other, "For better or for worse, for rich or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death us do part." It is a responsible relationship.

The practice of entering covenant

relationships is as old as the first semblance of civilization. Through the millenia it has been a cornerstone for justice, order, and harmony in human relations.

Hence, it is not surprising that early in the human story men began to believe they had a covenant with God, that they should have a responsible relationship with their Creator.

The Hebrew prophets, for example, taught that God the Creator accepts responsibility for man, His creation. He is not a being of whim and caprice. He is faithful and just in all His ways. He can be depended upon. "He fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isaiah 40:28). His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). "He is the living God, and steadfast forever" (Daniel 6:26). He is responsible in His dealings with mankind.

Also, they taught, man should be, indeed is, responsible in his dealings with God. He has life he did not give. He is born on an earth he did not create. He uses a body he did not fashion. He has access to resources he did not provide. Hence, he is under obligation to learn and obey the will of God, the Creator and Provider of all he is and has. Obedience to the will or laws of God, they declared, is man's part of the covenant. Through such obedience to law he attains order and harmony in his relationship with God and, of a consequence, within himself and with his fellows.

Man is responsible. He can choose to obey or disobey. He can cooperate with God or rebel against God. He can elect to worship God, his creator or to indulge in the idolatry of playing god to himself. He can follow after his own whims and desires of the moment or discipline them in loyalty to a higher law. Man is responsible.

This is the awesome glory which lifts us above all else in creation. The stars cannot choose which way they shall take on their long journey through space. A stone does not decide what hill it will rest upon for a million years. A flower does not elect to be clean and chaste. They have no choice. They merely exist. We alone can choose. We are responsible.

II

This is our glory, and this is our anguish. We are free to obey or disobey the laws essential for our well-being and salvation. Obedience to such laws is our responsibility and deep within we know it. But we cannot keep our part of the bargain. Knowledge of moral law teaches us what is right, but it does not enable us to do what is right. It is one thing to draw up an impressive list of New Year's resolutions. But to keep them, that is the rub!

No one has described this fundamental human predicament better than Paul when he said of himself: "I do not understand my actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it . . . . Wretched man that I am!" (Romans 8:15, 19, 24). Who doesn't recognize in that blunt statement the truth about himself!

This means that the old covenant which man had with God was based upon an error. It asked of man what he cannot do. By nature he is unable to keep his part of that bargain. He knows what is right but of himself often cannot do it. Of a consequence, knowledge of moral law merely deepens his sense of guilt and feeling of estrangement from God. A list of New Year's resolutions, worthy though it be, is not enough.

As Jeremiah, most sensitive and perceptive of the Prophets, realized, a new covenant between God and man was required, a covenant not of law but of grace. (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

III

This is the reason for Christmas, the meaning of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, indeed the very purpose of Christianity. As Jesus said, it institutes the New Covenant between God and man, a covenant not of law but of love. It is God entering man's life

to do for him what he cannot do for himself.

In Jesus Christ we have not abstract laws to learn and obey, but a Person to love and to follow. That makes a great difference.

Some time ago a man told me of his experience in learning Hebrew. In his student days, Hebrew as well as Greek was a required language in the best theological seminaries. For those who may not know, may I say Hebrew is difficult. It is foreboding to look upon, awkward to pronounce, and painful to learn. The average student regards it much as a cat views the neighbor's dog. But he said, "I had a professor who made the study of Hebrew a thrilling experience. His great endowments as a scholar and a teacher, his personal warmth and winsomeness, and his deep love for the subject, and especially for his students, made Hebrew contagious."

So Jesus Christ makes goodness winsome and righteousness contagious. He gathers up the moral laws essential for order and harmony in our relationship with God, ourselves, and others in His Life. In Him they become a Person we can love and follow. He awakens in us the power of love by first loving us. Through love for Him we are indwelt by His spirit, which is power to do the good we know. Thus He delivers us from bondage to evil and sets us free to live in hope and joy as God's children, joint-heirs of His riches.

This is the New Covenant offered us on this first Sunday of the New Year. It is a gift we cannot earn. It is ours to accept in gratitude and dedication.

YOUR OPTION ON A NEW LIFE

Gene E. Bartlett, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York

From the turbulent days of the war there comes a strange sidelight story from England. It is said that during those years plants and flowers which had been extinct began to make their appearance again. It seems that the seeds had lain deep in the earth for a long time. Then came the bombings. Old roads were torn up, and large bomb craters left deep places in the earth open to sun and rain. In these scarred places of the earth, those seeds began to grow. Year after year the seeds had been there waiting for the awakening by sunlight and warmth.

In addition to being an interesting footnote, this also is a picture of life. From the early Christians, we have the word that some things started to grow in their lives which had long been hidden. It is stated in these very words in that letter we call 1 Peter, "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." Two things there, you see, the enduring seed and the awakening word.

At this season when we acknowledge God's gift to us with thankful joy, it seems fitting to recognize that there are two essential gifts with which He has endowed every life. Because of these gifts, you have your chance. Because of these, you have an option on a new life.

I

First, there is in each of us the enduring seed of a new life. "Imperishable," says the New Testament of it. How difficult it is to believe that sometimes! Yet, in the Biblical view of life, that capacity for new life is a basic and constant theme. God has put the seed of new life in every man, and though it is buried deeper and deeper beneath our indifferences, our sin, and the habits we accumulate, still somewhere it is there.

This describes one of the miracles which Jesus always was bringing about. So often He touched a life that everyone else thought hopeless and

observed that seed of life hidden but still there. Perhaps it was a woman who had walked the streets but who came in a strange response to anoint the feet of the Master in homage and love. Beneath all that sin, new life was still a possibility, and she found it. Perhaps it was a tax gatherer, like Zacchaeus, a traitor to his people, outcast and hated, who, surely, must have built a shell around himself just to survive. But one day Jesus penetrated that shell and found the nucleus of a new life hidden there and a man came down the tree to a new beginning. Once it was fishermen, fretful and dishearted in the business of earning their living, who, confronted in the very moment of their discouragement, revealed that the capacity for full life was still there waiting to be touched. So they followed. Yes, it often seems to us unbelievable that the divine seed could be imperishable, but look at the life of our Lord and see!

As this New Year comes there are some of us for whom this is the most important truth which could be grasped. Perhaps you wonder what the future possibly can be unless something is touched and released in you. The demands have g r o w n greater through the years until you now need to find what the poet meant, "He gives more strength as the labors increase." Unless that can happen, your whole life seems threatened.

It may be for some others a deep inner struggle which has come on through the years, sometimes less, sometimes more, but always there. What a new life it could be if that struggle were resolved! There are some lives which have fallen into pettiness and, therefore, need to be made new.

Most of us have a real stake in this belief that the seed of the new life is imperishable. The new life may be a reversal or a release or a renewal. But it is a part of the gospel, that newness in the momentous possibility. In each of us there is the enduring seed that waits.

II

But this brings us to stand for a moment before the second gift of God. It is the awakening word. The New Testament writer called it "the living and abiding word of God."

When you stop to think of it, nothing would be a more ready instrument for God's use than a word. Wherever we have it, there is something wonderful about a word. A word can arouse hatred, an encouraging word can arouse hope, a supporting word can bring strength, and a loving word can call out love. By words alone we can relive the past in memory and anticipate the future in hope. By words we impart the knowledge of one generation to another. Yes, a word does awaken us to something wherever it is. It calls out response in those who hear.

It is not surprising then, that God made it His instrument. And the Bible makes clear again and again that this is the way God does His work in us. From the earliest stories of the Bible record to the deeply moving drama of our Lord's life, it is God speaking His word that calls out new life. God speaks, as a great saint Abelard put it, "that he might illuminate the world by His wisdom and excite it to the love of Himself."

But for us that word has come to its height in Jesus Christ. At this time we remember him especially as a "Word made flesh." Here above all is the way in which God by His word awakens the seed of new life in all of us. To be sure, it is a mystery. Who can really explain it? But it is the great reality of the Christian way. When Christ comes the awakening word touches our lives.

III

But is that all that is to be said? What's still missing? Instinctively, you feel that it's not quite complete. And it isn't. B e c a u s e in us when an awakening word comes, it requires our consent.

Surely, this time is the hour to say Yes. I know of no deeper meaning of this season than the facing of that decision again. Isabel Sanderson has suggested that there must have come a day for the innkeeper in the beautiful story when he realized that he had said No. She has written to him:

Recalling the walk to the stable,
The stall he was willing to loan.
His soul must have murmured in anguish:
"Dear God, had I only known!"
How great was the innkeeper's sorrow
Quickened by memory's prod!
How heavy the burden he carried—
No room for the Son of God!

But we know better, and it need not be so for us. It rests now for each of us to make the circle complete: the enduring seed, the awakening word, and our willing consent.

TO ENDLESS YEARS THE SAME

Herbert East Richards, First Methodist Church, Boise, Idaho

Text: "This is God, our God for ever and ever." Psalm 48:14.

As we approach our date with destiny, yesterday's mistakes can help us live more successful tomorrows. Janus-like, we look backward to look forward. We examine our past experiences to discover those activities in our pragmatic generation that can give dependability and direction amidst movement and flux.

Accordingly, our Scripture text from the praises of Israel discloses a religious absolute. This absolute was revealed to the people of Israel as they joined in processions walking round and round the city of Zion. As the pilgrims joined in rhythmical processional steps, they thought of the meaning of history, the meaning of their racial traditions, and the meaning of God in their lives. As these Semitic crusaders tramped about their Holy City, their thoughts were lifted to the City not built with hands. The tower of David, the wall upon which Isaiah walked, and Jeremiah's corner of controversy inspired their cadenced steps and alerted minds until they were able to speak as a people having authority—the authority of mature people who have combined history, spirituality, judgment, grace and mercy. To the sons of Moses came the rhythmical word:

Walk about Zion, go round about her,
Number her towers,
Consider well her ramparts,
Go through her citadels;
That you may tell the next generation
That this is God,
Our God for ever and ever.
He will be our guide for ever.

Thus spake Israel, and such truth is "to endless years the same."

Out of the cauldron of our past experiences may I dip three major axioms? Doubtless you could suggest many others. The first axiom that I shall suggest is simple, the second simpler, and the third is the simplest of all. Nevertheless, these permanent absolutes not alone change our lives, but our lives have proved them changeless.

I

If we injure others, we injure ourselves.

The graveyards of history are full of skeletons of men who have sought to kill the spirit of others, and who in so doing have killed their inner selves. Such self-inflicted wounds have been administered by men within and without the Church. We do not profess the Church to be a congress of saints. I do not look upon you as unblemished, any more than you look upon me as faultless. We

are seekers, strivers for truth! When I hear a conscience-stricken soul pontificate that there is someone in the church not as good as he, I am not at all amazed. We in the church know our great needs, and therefore seek help beyond ourselves to meet life's tragedies and to consummate life's joys. I am amazed, however, to hear such attacks upon hypocrisy by a self-righteous, out-of-the-church prude, who insulates himself from helping others by remaining absent from, and even attacking the church-loyal seekers who admit limitations, and are humble before their God. When the non-church "self-canonized saint" attacks the hypocrisy of a member of the church, he is not living up to the very noble motives about which he prattles. When he injures others, he injures himself.

Out of the annuals of the past come records of councils in which men illustrated the truth of the principle that when one injures others, he injures himself. Such records can be found in the minutes of church trustee boards, the records of the significant Council of Nicea in 325, the Council of Chalcedon 451, the Council of Trent 415-43, the Vatican Council, in which the infallibility of the Pope was decreed, or the twentieth century's Amsterdam Conference.

In an early council, 325, the Arian controversy took place in which Arius was locked in mental and spiritual conflict with Athanasius. Some years later, in the year 355 A.D., a council met at Milan during which Athanasius was condemned. We are helped more by the revelation of the character of the men who participated in the Council of Milan than by the decisions made there. Athanasius entered the council with but one purpose, that purpose was to help his fellow men to live better, to think clearly, and to get closer to the truth and perfection of God. His Homoousian doctrine was helpful to many in conceiving of the great powers of God and the divine force in human life. With such high motive and spirit he entered the council.

A second not-so-high spirit emanated from Emperor Constantius. Constantius was present unseen. Through the force of his dictates and through the lieutenants whom he commanded, he sent instructions of hatred, antagonism, and viciousness. When the Bible canon was discussed, Constantius decreed, "What I wish, that is the canon." This meant, that so far as he was concerned, the contents of the Bible in the future would be determined by Emperor Constantius and by his fiats alone.

Athanasius, who knew neither dictators nor fear, was in imminent danger. On February 8, 356 A.D., during the course of an all-night service in the church of St. Theonas, the Emperor's General Syrianus, with five thousand troops, surrounded the church. Athanasius retained his presence of mind. He invited the congregation to read the 130th Psalm. The worshipers repeated over and over, "His mercy endureth for ever, His mercy endureth for ever." The soldiers attacked, and only under most unusual circumstances did Athanasius escape death.

History has recorded the escape and triumph of Athanasius, and men today appreciate his contributions to the spiritual life of the human race: on the other hand, the Emperor Constantius has fallen into history's mire as a man of poor judgment and fierce emotional instability.

Constantius sought to crush Athanasius; he injured himself. Athanasius sought to help others; he helped himself. Even today one of America's most erudite pulpiteers refers to this ancient church father as "Athanasius, the Hero." A truth that is to endless years the same!

II

If we help others, we help ourselves.

There is no place in which the truth of this axiom can be better illustrated than that of your home. When your

attitude is one of love and devotion, you not only help to bring happiness to your wife or husband, but you help to bring abundant joy to yourself.

Not long ago a family came to a minister and spoke the most unfortunate words one can hear. With emotion-filled voice they exclaimed: "We want a divorce!" The very fact that they had come together to talk and counsel with their minister meant that neither wanted a divorce, but their problems had seemed so overwhelming that they no longer could face life together. Nevertheless, the outpouring of their heartaches, their conflicts, and the causes of disaffection minimized the difficulties; and the minister had the great opportunity of seeing devotion return, two hearts beat again in the symphony of holy matrimony, four eyes well up in tears, and the light of love return as in former years. The day before Christmas a telephone call came to the minister. The trembling voice heard over the wire was that of the father, who but a few months before had been planning to divorce his wife. It was a voice filled with emotion, a heart-piercing sound that ministers hear most every day. With all the sincerity at his command, the father blurted, "We are together—it will be a glorious Christmas because we are together. I want to thank you, pastor, for giving us the opportunity of the greatest gift in all the world — that of being ONE this Christmas season."

His statement of appreciation was followed by what seemed to be an interminable silence, after which his wife's voice could be heard. She concurred that the problems that had seemed great now were small; and that love had been re-established for the remainder of their lives. Gone with the old year were the plans of divorce, gone with the passing of time were tragedies and hatreds. A few moments later, excited tiny voices could be heard saying over the wires of the phone, "Thank you for a merry Christmas," as each of three twittering children expressed his gratitude for the little Christmas cards sent by the minister. Little did the children know what great gift was theirs; they did not know what gift they might have lost—the gift of a loving home. When the telephone receiver was replaced, the minister stared at the floor. Speechless! Happy! He reaffirmed the truth in our sermon that we cannot help others without helping ourselves.

This year may we cancel and strike out any vicious word. May we broadcast the kind word that will help others and ourselves. I have observed men and women this past year who have learned the lesson of sincere appreciation. I have watched them as they remained silent when they could have very easily said something negative about another. They have learned the secret of human nature and of ultimate joy—when we help others, we help ourselves.

By the same token, your church has gained much strength because her members have thought of others in need. You have not forgotten the discouraged, you have not forgotten the mission fields near and far, thereby, you and your church have grown in effectiveness and Christian influence. One of the most beloved men I have ever met, lived and taught this lesson. Day after day he would visit those in great need, to bring a little cheer, but his was the victory, and his the glowing spirit.

III

Selfless religion will make us happy. Better than that, it will make us great.

Religion is not designed primarily to give us happiness. Happiness comes as the result of a religious experience. Religion, with its worship of God and its call to humility, will make us great.

Not long ago a reporter told me that he was going on a crusade for health. Have you ever met a person who spent his or her life in such a

crusade for physical beauty or health? Such an individual may have a real sickness or he may not. He decrees that he is going to arise at a set hour, walk a measured number of steps a day, take prescribed pills, and before he is finished he finds that he has put himself into a cruel h e a l t h straightjacket, until his whole mental outlook becomes so affected that he cannot digest his food, and at last this very crusade becomes a means of breaking down his own effectiveness physically, mentally and spiritually. We do not get health by going on a crusade for it. We get it with day-by-day clean thought, clean living, ample rest, and a positive perspective on life. When all of these factors work together quietly and normally, one's strength is increased to face disease when it comes. In a like manner, if you want happiness, do not go on a crusade for it. Happiness and health are not for crusades, because when they become ends in themselves, they at the same time become grails of gold beyond the rainbow.

Too many Americans seek to be happy. Our nation produces millions of gallons of intoxicating liquids and reams of escapist printed matter with the end in view of forgetting ourselves and of achieving contentment. Even within the church we find those who worship at the altar of relaxation rather than at the Cross.

You will get happiness as a result of integrity and self-efficiency. As Ezekiel says, "Stand on thy feet." The church is designed to make you great, and when you achieve the greatness that is within you, happiness will spread over you as a blanket of inner-satisfaction, than which there is no greater contentment.

Over and over again your religion and your faith will remind you that—you can be great! Within your own area of life, within the bounds of your physical endurance, you can live successfully and supremely! You can perform your task in life with the air of distinction and the perspective of success. There is no greater inspiration than that of knowing that one can be great within himself, whether he be a two, five, or ten talent person. Self-productivity is one of the impressive revelations or gifts that comes from God, and this assurance within one's breast is propaedeutic to humility in its noblest form. The proud person betrays his inner insecurity. The humble person knows his abilities, and gives God credit for them.

At the beginning of next January you will be looking back upon the year now before us. At that time you will look back to a day of sorrow. You will remember a sad day as a memorial to a dear friend or loved one. You may also remember a red letter day, during which twenty-four hours you performed a great service to a friend, neighbor, or to your church. Perhaps it was the day when temptation came. It may have been a temptation to lie, or maliciously attack another's character, or it may have been a temptation to perform some vile deed, or to avoid something noble.

Next January you will scan the past year and look upon black days with the emotion of despair, until you have the desire to rip the calendar from the wall and crumple it in your hands, saying of dark days "away from my memory, away!" On the other hand, your triumphant day may be in August, September or December. Your religion can make you great, and can give you the preparation for happiness beyond your greatest expectations.

During the year ahead, your mistakes and evil decisions will bring you into the realization that you need refreshment and a new start in life. You will want to start a clean new year's scroll. Each Sacrament of the Holy Communion is an opportunity to open such a scroll in your life. When the sins that have beset you are left on the altar of God as you take the sacred cup and the precious

bread, you renew your human spirit with the Spirit of the Divine. Your life's new scroll is opened with purity and cleanliness. In the words of Descartes, you have a clean slate, or "Tabula rosa."

My friends, may the scroll of your coming year be inscribed with great care in daily living before it is placed tenderly in your library of life. You do not know the number of volumes that will be placed in the library of your life. Nor do I! You will do well to have your scrolls always ready to be read by your fellow men and by your God. Remember, when we injure others, we injure ourselves. When we help others, we help ourselves. Whenever we turn to sincere religion we receive happiness, more than that, we receive the qualifications that make us great. These are truths! To endless years the same!

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Homer J. R. Elford, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

My experience as a mountain climber is much too limited to qualify me for membership in that select group who have scaled rugged peaks. On two occasions, however, once on Mt. Ranier in the State of Washington and once in the Tetons of Wyoming, I have followed mountain trails which led from the pleasant meadows to heights above the tree line. Those brief and limited excursions were enough to enable me to share some of the exhilaration which must come to those who devote their best energies of the body and the mind and spirit to conquering mountains. There comes a moment when one is able to look out across measureless frontiers and forget the rugged trail, with all its dangerous crevasses, glacial streams, which held at least the peril of a frigid soaking, and see only the treetops and small, beautiful lakes that one did not know to exist. Throwing oneself to the ground in an effort to breathe more freely the rarified air, many of us say aloud: "This is as far as I choose to go. Others may wish to climb higher, but knowing what I do now about this mountain trail and my own resources, the prospect of another plateau is too foreboding."

I

Let us liken the great adventure of living to a mountain climbing experience. Whether we ever gain any great height or not, each one of us finds himself on this steep and rugged trail which leads across the dangerous crevasses and treacherous glacial streams. At such an hour as this, when we stand between the measureless past and the measureless future, we find ourselves pausing to rest and catch our breath. However pleasant it may be at the moment, reflection brings to mind some great crisis which we have encountered. Like amateur mountain climbers we may be sorely tempted to say: "This is as far as I choose to go. Others may wish to climb higher; others may wish to enter into the new year, but knowing what I do now about this steep trail of life, and feeling at the end of my resources, the prospect of another plateau is too foreboding."

Let's suppose that everyone felt that way. Presume that everyone who had ever started out on a mountain trail had given up at the first easy resting place. There would still be no flag on the top of the world's highest peak. And assume that everyone had decided that after about so much struggle to overcome the obstacles of life that he had had enough. How impoverished would be the world of science, letters, and art! One cannot imagine Louis Pasteur, or Madame Curie, or Dr. Salk having such an attitude. If that had been the depth of their spirit of high adventure, many

of us would long ago have succumbed to the ravages of the diseases which they helped to conquer. On an even more specific level, suppose that parents should come up to a given point in life, and then decide to go no further. Unfortunately we need not overtax imagination when searching for examples of this. When the going gets rough many feel that if life is going to be a continual struggle against the forces which mitigate against easy happiness, they better give up.

How we all need to be stirred to a fresh awareness of the wonderful resources which wait to serve those who will lay hold upon them. We may as well face it. A great deal of the success of a mountain climber depends on simply putting one foot ahead of the other and then shoving the other ahead of it; reaching up for one shrub or rock projection and pulling oneself forward and upward; it involves stumbling and picking oneself up again, straining hitherto unemployed muscles, taxing corners of the lungs which have become sluggish during easy saunters on level ground.

II

And a great deal of the success of living likewise depends on living just one day at a time, getting up, eating, working and then going to bed again to gain a new lease on strength to repeat the process over and over again. Life, too, requires reaching for some handles of hope, some anchors of love, some rocks of faith on which to plant our feet on a little higher ground each day. We sympathize with the person who does not feel some slight exhilaration of spirit when he massages newly employed muscles of the body, mind, and spirit as he reaches some hard-won plateau of life.

How do we do it? What's the secret whereby we manage to keep going and climbing from one day's round on the ladder of life to the next? It is a quality in the human spirit which responds to a challenge and knows that life was never meant to be easy and that man never shows his manliness quite so much as when he outwits and overcomes the obstacles which life hurls at him.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery in his book titled "Wind, Sand and Stars," tells about the rescue of his friend Guillaumet, an air pilot whose plane had been forced down on a frozen crag of the Andes. Guillaumet, who was not equipped to face the cold and ice, had determined to die standing so that rescuers might find his body and his wife could claim their small insurance. When he was at last found, he mumbled through frozen lips, "I swear that what I went through, no animal would have gone through." The author adds: "This sentence, the noblest ever spoken, this sentence that defines man's place in the universe, that honors him, that re-establishes the true hierarchy, floats back into my thoughts." Well, it floats back into our thoughts, too, to remind us that when there is a real will to live and a determination to survive and to overcome life's obstacles, there is a divine power which surges into us and through us to enable us to scale the last unconquered peak.

You still say that with what you know about the trail, now that you have come this far, and feeling as you do, worn and weary, you just don't have the courage to become a prospector? You say that you feel the mine is barren and that the well is dry, and that you don't much care whether tomorrow dawns or not?

You are listening to the wrong message if you expect to have your pessimism encouraged. This is designed to encourage faith and courage for daily living. Why? Because the Church of Jesus Christ is an institution centered around a living personality whose very nature is hope. We believe that just as we have been companioned on our climb by the living presence of a God who has

promised never to leave or forsake us, He will go with us into this new year which has dawned. His power will not fail us, leaving us in the dark. He will go with us all the way, and in His strength we shall be able to conquer any obstacles which life may throw into our path.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING from page 2

tor's mind and practice, but it also emphasizes ways by which a pastor may implement the book's ideas in his work. (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 176 pp., $4.65)

Message and Mission by Eugene A. Nida, executive secretary of the American Bible Society, concerns the communication of the Christian faith according to the numerous levels of experience and studies. The author introduces the reader "to principles and procedures of communication and [focuses] attention on the outworking of such factors." The book's unusual and vital approach warrants the thoughtful consideration of the entire Christian community. The author's wide understanding of Biblical translation and transmission further enhances the book's significance. (Harper & Brothers, 253 pp., $5)

The Cross Before Calvary by Clovis G. Chappell includes five sermonic studies of Old Testament personalities — Joseph, Daniel, Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah — in whom is revealed the spirit and meaning of the Cross. This book will furnish many pastors with ideas for an excellent and valuable Lenten series. (Abingdon Press, 62 pp., $1.50)

The Christian as a Doctor by James T. Stephens and Edward Long, Jr., and **Christianity and the Scientist** by Ian G. Barbour are the first two volumes in a series entitled "The Christian in His Vocation." These commendable books are slanted to professionals and pre-professionals in the respective fields, but their value also extends to all who wish to gain a better understanding of those who specialize in an age of professional competence. The second volume clarifies much of the confused thinking regarding faith and science. (Association Press, 126 pp., $2.50 each)

EARL W. BLOOMQUIST
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THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

THE BELOVED PSALM: PARAPHRASES AND MEDITATIONS

The following paraphrases, notes, and meditations indicate the way in which the words and meanings of the Twenty-third Psalm have permeated the thoughts and hearts, not only of Christians, but of all humanity.

I

This poem, "The Teacher's Psalm," was written by Henry van Dyke, clergyman, educator, and writer:

The Lord is my teacher, I shall not lose the way.
He leadeth me in the lowly path of learning;
He prepareth a lesson for me every day;
He bringeth me to the fountains of instruction;
Little by little He showeth me the beauty of truth;
The world is a great book that He hath written;
He turneth the leaves for me slowly;
They are all inscribed with images and letters;
He poureth light on the pictures and words.
He taketh me by the hand to the hilltop of vision;
And my soul is glad when I perceive His meaning;
In the valley He also walketh beside me;
In the dark places He whispereth to my heart.
Even though my lesson be hard, it is not hopeless;
For the Lord is patient with His new scholar;
He will wait awhile for my weakness;
And help me to read the truth through tears.

II

"The Air Force Academy's Psalm" has been adapted as a special prayer for the students of the Academy:

The Lord is my Pilot, I shall not falter.
He sustaineth me as I span the skyway . . .
Yea, though I fly through treacherous storms and darkness,
I shall fear no evil, for He is with me . . .
Surely, His goodness and mercy
Shall accompany me each moment in the air
And I shall dwell in His matchless heavens forever.

III

"The Tribesmen's Psalm" is a version written by the Paiute Indians who live on the reservation at McDermitt, Nevada:

"The Great Father above a Shepherd Chief is. I am his and with him I want not. He throws me out a rope and the name of the rope is love and he draws me to where the grass is green and the water not dangerous, and I eat and lie down and am satisfied.

"Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be a long time, he will draw me into a valley. It is dark there but I will be afraid not, for it is in between those mountains that the Shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger that I have in my heart all through this life will be satisfied.

"Sometimes my heart is very weak and falls down, but he lifts me up again and draws me into a good road. His name is wonderful.

"Sometimes he makes the love rope into a whip, but afterwards he gives me a staff to lean upon. He spreads

a table before me with all kinds of foods. He puts his hand upon my head and all the tired is gone. My cup he fills till it runs over. What I tell is true. I lie not. These roads that are away ahead will stay with me through this life and after; and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever."

IV

An unknown author has written "The Seaman's Psalm":

"The Lord is my Pilot; I shall not drift. He lighteneth me across the dark waters; He steereth me in deep channels; He keepeth my log. He guideth me by the star of holiness for His name's sake. Yea, though I sail mid the thunders and tempests of life I will dread no danger, for Thou art near me. Thy love and care they shelter me. Thou preparest a harbor before me in the homeland of Eternity. Thou anointest the waves with oil; my ship rideth calmly. Surely sunlight and starlight shall favor me on the voyage I take, and I will rest in the port of my God forever."

V

I have included the following paraphrase, "A Parody on the Twenty-third Psalm in the Spirit of the Age" by the Rev. Edward K. Ziegler, because it sets in sharp contrast the mood of dependence and trust reflected in the Twenty-third Psalm and the smug self-sufficiency characteristic of our secular generation:

Science is my shepherd; I shall not want;

He maketh me to lie down on foam-rubber mattresses;

He leadeth me beside six-lane highways.

He rejuvenates my thyroid glands;

He leadeth me in the paths of psychoanalysis for peace of mind's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of the iron curtain, I will fear no communist; for thou art with me; thy radar screen and thy hydrogen bomb, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a banquet before me in the presence of the world's billion hungry people.

Thou anointest my head with home permanents.

My beer-glass foameth over.

Surely prosperity and pleasure shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in Shangri-La forever.

VI

These exegetical notes represent my thoughts after reading "The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today" by Samuel Terrien. I have freely borrowed ideas, sometimes quoting verbatim, from Dr. Terrien's book, which should be on the bookshelf of every Bible student.

The ancient Hebrews were nomads who drove their flocks over large pastures for centuries before they finally settled in Palestine and learned the arts of husbandry. Even during the Biblical period the Israelites were shepherds as well as farmers, and they well knew the infinite amount of care, patience, skill, and sometimes self-sacrificing heroism required of the pastoral vocation. Therefore, no description of divine love and care for man would be more eloquent in their minds than the comparison of God to a shepherd.

At the grazing ground, the skillful shepherd knows the places where the grass is thick, fresh and green. After the sheep have eaten their fill, he does not immediately lead them to drink; otherwise some of them might bloat to death.

Narrow vales may not always be avoided. The Hebrew word tsalmuth means "deep shadow," not "shadow of death." Yet the latter translation is faithful to the poet's thought because often death lurked for the sheep in precipices and caves.

Interestingly, the psalmist does not speak of the "valley of death" but of "the valley of the shadow of death." There can be no shadow where there

is no light.

"Thy rod"—a sturdy club for jackals, wolves, and other wild beasts; "thy staff"—a long stick used to prod back into line the wayward or wandering sheep: the shepherd's implement of correction and discipline.

"Thou preparest a table." Originally the Hebrew word **shulcan** ("table") referred to the spreading of a cloak or leather skin on the ground. Some commentators think that beginning with verse 5 the figure the psalmist uses is no longer that of the shepherd but of the host. A table spread suggests a sheik's tent and desert hospitality. Terrien believes that there is no break and that the figure of the shepherd is preserved throughout the whole of the psalm.

Accidents happen despite the watchfulness of the shepherd. At eventide, when the flock is gathered to the fold, the shepherd examines his sheep one by one as they file in. Bruised and bloody heads are anointed with oil, and the animals which are sick with fatigue or fright receive in an actual earthen cup a medicinal potion made usually of fermented hemp or barley mixed with honey and therapeutic herbs.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow (pursue) me . . ." We are pursued by the evil realities of the world. We are also pursued by the divine love and affection. It was this phrase of the twenty-third psalm that inspired Francis Thompson to write his great poem, "The Hound of Heaven."

> Still with unhurrying chase
> And unperturbed peace,
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
> Came on the following Feet,
> And a voice above their beat—
> "Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

"All the days of my life." The expression in the Hebrew is difficult, and probably refers to old age.

> E'en down to old age, all my people shall prove,
> My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love.

The hope of personal immortality—"eternal life"—came with Christianity. To the Christian, God's love enfolds him down to old age and beyond, into the "house of the Lord," "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

VII

Not a shepherd, nor the shepherd, but, "The Lord is my shepherd."

Can we believe that?

It was much easier for the people who lived in Palestine centuries ago. Then the world was small and people were few. Now we are awed by the immensities of space and lost among the myriads of humans on earth.

In a universe so vast is it possible that the Power which created it should take any notice of human beings at all? Among the multiplied millions of people can one person be of any concern to Him?

One clue to an answer is to be found in the uniqueness of man. "Consider," says John Haynes Holmes, "the world with man eliminated from the scene! The sun would be here and the stars. Mountains would lift themselves to the skies and oceans roll to vast horizons. But all this would mean nothing without man to see and interpret." Of all values, man is the supreme value.

Another is to be found in the nature of love. "God so loved the world," is the affirmation of the Gospel. But there is no loving men in the mass. There can be good-will toward all humanity, but love implies a deeply personal relationship. If God does not love us as individuals, He does not love us at all.

Something of this was in the thought of Jesus when, in His beautiful allegory of the Shepherd and the Sheep, He said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow."

The God of the psalmist is no mere

bystander, observing, like an impervious Buddha, the joys and miseries of men. He lives with His people as a shepherd lives with his sheep. The use of three verbs in the psalm suggest something of the range of His activity in behalf of those who trust Him.

"Maketh" — "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." This is not, as some exegete has noted, the language of weariness, but of contentment. Hungry sheep are restless. Only the satisfied can rest.

"Leadeth" — "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Sheep will not drink from turbulent streams. They must slake their thirst at the quiet places. So must men.

We work in a hectic world and we are mistaken when we think that we must have excitement in our free hours if life is to be interesting. No life can stand the constant strain of noise and activity.

In all God's world the principle of alternation is at work. Trees must have rest if they are to produce fruit. Work and rest, held in balance, give life its poise and its peace.

"Restoreth" — "He restoreth my soul."

"Our spirits grow grey before our hair." Fatigue is in the mind before it is in the body. Our energies run down and we need renewal. So many things take their toll of our zest. Hard work with no apparent results brings discouragement. Criticism, fair or unfair, may lead to self-contempt. Disillusionment is hard to avoid when something or someone in whom we trusted fails.

But God's world is replete with healing agents. There is medicine for our bodies; and, for our souls, a warm handclasp when we feel alone; an unexpected letter with a word of hope; a turn in the wheel of fortune; the steadfast loyalty of a wife or husband; the trust of a little child. In everyday experiences as well as through mystic ways, "He restoreth" our souls.

The change from the third personal pronoun to the second is extremely significant. "He" can represent a belief, a philosophy merely. "Thou" signifies an experience. It is one thing to believe something about God. It is quite another to know Him in a personal encounter.

Much of our religion has come to us through others. The hymns we sing are not our hymns: we did not write them. If, in our worship at church, we recite the Apostles' Creed, the words are those of second-century Christians. The formulation represented a first-hand faith then. It may not now.

Dr. Arthur John Gossip asks searchingly whether we may not be living, far more than we know, on the spiritual traditions of our fathers.

Sometimes it takes a soul-shaking crisis to make our religion real and God our God. It can be an intellectual crisis, as in the case of Dr. Lin Yutang; or a moral crisis in an hour of terrible self-disclosure. Or it may be that HE becomes THOU in some dark valley of sorrow, where we discover that our inherited faith is not enough.

Years ago, in a column headed "Dumbbell Poems," a Chicago newspaper printed the following lines:

> My prayers were printed in a book,
> Smooth prayers, the paper fine;
> Gilt-edged and monogrammed
> To prove those prayers were mine.
>
> Scattered and torn things now, my prayers,
> Oft swept up on a moan;
> But I don't need a monogram
> To prove they are my own!

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake."

There is a rich insight in the argument between two elderly people who were arguing about what preachers used to call "the eternal security of the saints" — "once saved, always sav-

ed." One said, "If I were to be lost, I would be the loser; but God would lose more. I would lose my soul, but He would lose His character."

In his care of the flock, the shepherd's reputation is at stake.

Jesus once set in sharp contrast the faithfulness of the shepherd and the indifference of the hireling. "The hireling seeth the wolf coming and fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

One of His briefest parables portrays the anguish of a shepherd over one sheep that had strayed. Leaving the ninety and nine "in the wilderness," he pushed through briar and bramble and along mountainous paths until the lone lost sheep was found. "God is like that," He said.

The Good Shepherd's reputation is at stake. His good name is involved in the success of His shepherd-hood. Soon evening will come and the flock will be gathered to the fold, and all must be there.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for respose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

VIII

This prayer was written by the late Rev. Dr. Edwin McNeill Poteat:

"Shepherd of Israel! What a freight of memory and hope those ancient words bear. From the day when Thy chosen people wandered like a flock in the wilderness to the hour when the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep and even to this good and grave hour in the life of the world, thou hast guided and nurtured the children of men. Surely Thy pastures are always green, and Thy waters for our refreshment always cool and still.

"What folly, then, and what perverse and willful seeking has led us into barren wastes and to cisterns wherein there is no water? We acknowledge to Thee the grief to which our sins have brought us, and ask Thy forgiveness. And as we are chastened by Thy forgiveness, we resolve that by Thy power, we shall return to Thee who art still the shepherd of our souls. We thank Thee that there are yet fields into which Thou art ready to lead us, and that Thou hast not turned away from leading us as we have turned away from following after Thee. Make us conscious of our unity with all the world of men, with those who wander distraught and undone by sin, or confused and misled by selfish men, or despoiled by futile loyalties to dead hopes or empty promises. For they are still Thy children, and there will yet be one flock, and one shepherd.

"Give to Thy Church everywhere a vision as clear as the need for its witness; and a testimony that spareth not nor is afraid. To those who preach, grant Thy word of truth; to those who hear, a readiness to hearken. Build up, by such strength as Thou alone canst supply, a body of resolute and high-purposed men and women who will hear, and speak, and do Thy will in these troubled days; to the end that Thy Kingdom shall come on earth, as it is already come in heaven. Call us by name, Shepherd of Israel, and give us grace to follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt lead us. Amen."

WORTH QUOTING from page 2

those who love them and they don't care. They are satisfied to make the most of their limited talents, to enjoy their friends, and do what they must to the best of their ability . . . Pretense is a symptom of immaturity. It represents a failure to recognize we can be valuable in small parts as well

as in large ones. We sometimes feel God left us in the lurch when He distributed talents and abilities. We see too many people whose capacities leave us far in their wake . . . The simple fact is that we are not all equal, but we can be useful . . . Leonardo da Vinci looked upon the unhappiness and remarked, "O, wretched mortals, open your eyes." He was suggesting the scope of beauty that passes unseen, but he might well have been speaking to the myriad men doing ordinary tasks with distaste and half-heartedness. He could have said to them, "O wretched mortals, open your eyes" and see that your work can be oblation offered on the altars of God. You can make the commonplace uncommon by the way you deal with it. You can make the ordinary into the extraordinary if you dedicate yourself to it.

Harold Blake Walker

* * *

The crown of all faculties is common sense. It is not enough to do the right thing. It must be done at the right time and place. Talent knows what to do; tact knows when and how to do it.

William Matthews

* * *

When God allows a burden to be put upon you, He will put His own arm underneath you to help.

* * *

Life must be dedicated to a destiny in order to have meaning.

Ortegay Gasset

* * *

When one door of happiness closes, another opens. But often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the other which has been opened for us.

Helen Keller

* * *

The man who walks close to God will leave no room for the devil to come between.

Walter E. Isenhour

Every person should make the most of himself, for that is all he will ever have to work with.

* * *

We become neighbors when we begin to open doors for others. Doors to healing — of body, mind, and soul; doors to education, doors to opportunity, doors to understanding.

It is then our neighbor will open the door of his heart to us for trust and friendship. Did you ever know of a friendly neighborhood that was not a peaceful neighborhood?

Let us remember just three doors—the door we open to others, the door we open for others, and the door others open to us.

Edith Kay Simcox

* * *

Like most Americans, I grew up with the feeling that time was a commodity that must never be wasted. One of the great rewards of meditation has been the rediscovery of "inside time." It has taken much of the frantic quality out of my daily living. I no longer rush to catch a bus—another will come along presently. I used to think desperately of all the wonderful things going on that I was missing for lack of time. What a relief to realize that the really important events in life are the ones that happen inside of us!

A psychiatrist friend once told me, "The trouble with most of my patients is that they have lost touch with themselves. They're on the outside looking in." Isn't this what ails the so-called "organization men" and "other-directed" personalities? Isn't it what Thoreau had in mind when he wrote, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"?

Fortunately, there is and always has been a remedy for having the world too much with us. "Nowhere," the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius reminded himself in his "Meditations," "does a man retire with more quiet or freedom than into his own soul."

John Kord Lagemann

We have some hazy ideas as to what actually constitutes a blessing. In the minds of most of us it means some divine intervention which lightens our load, solves our problem, or smooths out the path which lies ahead of us. A "blessing" is, therefore, a labor saver, an insulation against trouble, and divine endorsement designed to eliminate struggle or to enhance our success. As a matter of fact, trouble can be a blessing.

The teacher who assigns a difficult lesson to a bright pupil is, actually, blessing him by making it necessary for him to grow in order to overcome. The sales manager who assigns the young salesman to a difficult territory may be doing him a great favor . . . . If comfort, ease, and quick success are our ideas of achievement, then many of the great blessings of life may prove burdensome. But if rugged strength, persistent patience, and enduring satisfactions are our goals then let us give thanks for the blessings that come wrapped up in difficulties. It is easy to ask for a blessing from God; it is a different matter if we do our work in a way that deserves the blessing.

Roy L. Smith

* * *

But evil is wrought by want of thought, as well as want of heart.

Thomas Hood

* * *

A good teacher must love a lot. One of the greatest loves for a child is discipline. Discipline comes from the word disciple — to walk with dignity beside you. Your biggest job as a parent is to become gradually unnecessary — to teach him to walk without you.

Judge Philip B. Gilliam

* * *

It is better to live by faith than to debate it; more fruitful to advance the cause of our Christianity by deepening our own spiritual experience than argue this or that way of promoting it.

Donald S. Lamka

A distinguished Christian missionary, returning from India a few years ago, declared that the present generation of American youths was stronger in body and keener in mind than its predecessors, but lacked a sense of mission. He said he had asked a company of college students what their mission in life was. After a painful silence, one ventured this answer: "I guess it is to get ahead in the world, isn't it?" Shortly afterward, when the missionary reported this incident to a group of businessmen, they could not find much wrong with the answer. Perhaps today the popular concept of greatness is outstripping one's competitors. But this was not always so.

Ralph W. Sockman

* * *

This is that which we call character —a reserved force which acts directly by presence and without means.

Ralph W. Emerson

* * *

I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. Really great men have a curious feeling that the greatness is not in them but through them. And they see something divine in every other man and are endlessly, incredibly merciful.

John Ruskin

* * *

The more self-awareness a person has, the more alive he is.

Rollo May

* * *

In some of our evangelistic visitations, people say, "I am not good enough." Of course, we do not recommend that criminals be maintained as church members, but when a locomotive is fired to pull a train, it does not need enough steam to drive it 60 miles an hour. It just needs steam enough to start. To be a Christian one just needs "steam enough to start."

Stanley D. Preve in **Shepherds**

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